

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

"One interest will prevail . . . Christ our righteousness."

September/October 2011



ONCE MORE WITH POWER

THE BIRTHPLACE OF ADVENTISM IS FEELING
THE SPIRIT ONCE AGAIN

Articles

3 EDITORIAL:
The Real Problem With
“Spiritual Formation”
by Shawn Brace

4 Letters to the Editor

5 Once More With Power
by Shawn Brace

6 Studies in Galatians: The Two
Covenants—Gal. 4:21-24
by A.T. Jones

8 Is Justification Legal?
by Jerry Finneman

10 A Call to Repentance
by Ellen G. White

11 Resurrecting the Gospel of Christ
and His Righteousness
by Edmond Labbe

13 EDITORIAL:
Lessons from Today
by Bill Brace

Front Cover Photo: Chocorua, New Hampshire
Back Cover Photo: Swift River, New Hampshire

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

EDITOR
Shawn Brace

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Bill Brace

PROOFREADING EDITOR
Wanda Hopkins

LAYOUT DESIGN/PRINTER
L. Brown and Sons Printing, Inc.
1-800-486-1947

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR
(207)249-8457
newenglandpastormagazine.blogspot.com
newenglandpastor@gmail.com

ADDRESS:
67 Cottage St.
Bangor, ME 04401

New England Pastor is a bi-monthly magazine for pastors in New England, carrying forth the vision that Ellen White had for the area over a century ago: “I saw that when the message shall increase greatly in power, then the providence of God will open and prepare the way in the East for much more to be accomplished than can be at the present time” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 149,). It is free of charge to those who pastor in New England. For all those living outside of New England who would like to subscribe, please call or email us.



The Real Problem With “Spiritual Formation”

by Shawn Brace

A lot has been made recently about the topic of “spiritual formation.” Books have been written, blogs have been posted, sermons have been preached, pastors and teachers have been accused. It has become one of the hottest issues within Adventism.

At the center of the controversy is the idea that certain individuals within our ranks are promoting—or, at the very least, unwittingly endorsing—a “New Spirituality” that goes beyond an innocent and appropriate spirituality that the Bible and Ellen White promote, and into the world of Eastern spirituality, Catholic mysticism, and pantheism. We hear phrases like “contemplative prayer,” “centering prayer,” and “meditation” thrown around, and the result has been an atmosphere of suspicion and criticism.

Just recently, one of our denomination’s publications conducted an interview with a few professors from our seminary on the topic. In the interview, the individuals sought to assure Adventists that, though some of the “buzz” terminology has been used, the seminary is not promoting in any way a form of “Spiritual Formation” that is on a par with Catholic or Eastern versions of it.

I read the article with interest because I had taken a class in the seminary from one of the professors who was being interviewed—a professor whom I respect greatly and believe to be a genuine man of God, who has also written for *New England Pastor* in the past. In fact, it was the class “Spiritual Formation” (which, in an attempt to alleviate concerns, has subsequently been renamed “Foundations of Biblical

Spirituality”) and it was the very first class that I took in the seminary—a class that all incoming M.Div students are required to take at the very beginning of their seminary training. Overall, I felt as though the interview accurately reflected my experience in the class, and I did not notice any overt—or even subtle—reliance upon the unfortunate practices that have been allegedly borrowed from Catholic and Eastern religions. There was no mention of “centering prayer” or anything of the sort—at least that I can remember (though, in the interest of full disclosure, it has been five years since I took the class and my ear was not necessarily attuned for these buzz phrases).

With that being said, I do have some serious concerns about the emphasis on so-called “Spiritual Formation” that goes beyond any type of “New Age” connection it may or may not have. The truth is, I do not know if there are people within our ranks who are deliberately—or even unwittingly—promoting a type of spirituality that borders on the spiritualistic; there very well might be. The real concern for me with “Spiritual Formation” is that it very subtly leads people into an old covenant (or salvation by works) mentality and experience.

Every theological or spiritual paradigm either leads people into a system of salvation by works or a system of salvation by grace. There is no middle ground. Either the paradigm leads to a man-initiated old covenant experience or a God-initiated new covenant experience. It either engenders to bondage or it engenders to freedom. It either focuses on man, seeking God, or God, seeking man.

For my money, the “Spiritual Formation” paradigm sadly falls into the

former category—it is a paradigm that seems to focus on what man has to do to seek and get ahold of God—rather than vice-versa.

But is God so hard to find that we need to jump through all these hoops to find Him?

I picked up a copy just recently of a book that, for many, is the authoritative work on “Spiritual Formation.” The book was required reading for a class I took a decade ago on “personal spirituality” as an undergrad. Wanting to get a better sense of where this paradigm is coming from, I was fairly startled to read again the explanation of why a person goes about engaging in so-called “spiritual disciplines.” The author—who comes from the Quaker tradition—writes, “God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace.”¹

As I re-read this explanation, I once again realized why I was so uneasy with the book—and the class—over a decade ago. The author proposes that we go about certain disciplines—meditation, prayer, fasting, solitude, service, etc.—as a way of receiving God’s grace. But is this how we “receive” God’s grace? Isn’t this more akin to the Catholic method of receiving grace—which is done through the sacraments—than what the Bible prescribes? Do we not receive God’s grace when our hearts respond by faith to the proclamation of the Gospel (see Romans 10:10, 17; Ephesians 2:8; 3:17; etc.)—a point that the Protestant Reformation rested upon?²

To be fair, the author of this book—and many others—would say that we are saved entirely by grace and that our salvation is based solely upon the merits of Christ. What they are talking about, they will say, is the process of

continued on page 4

I was pleased to receive the latest edition of *New England Pastor*. I have missed perusing its contents for the diversity of thought, and variety of topics covered. Glad you're back. I am blessed because the focus is most often on our relationship to Jesus. I'll always need the encouragement of knowing others of like faith are plying the waters of His Amazing Grace.

The article reporting on, "The simple study of the Word," ("The Start of Something Great," January/February 2011) that convened in the Chapel at Camp Lawroweld, moved me deeply. When folks seek God in this fashion, something divinely magical happens. Your description of the time together witnesses to that—and God smiles.

It was in a similar environment 40 years ago that I experienced spiritual fellowship that led to my conversion. His Grace was revealed and experienced through study of the Scriptures and in the fellowship with others seeking truth. This is the formula that still works today.

I pray that more folks will discover this and warm the Heart of God. Then sooner than later will be the day of that final reunion with our Maker.

Yours truly,

—Jim Brassard, Brunswick, Maine, Chaplain for Gold Cross of America

Thanks for the piece "Reflections on the Objective and Subjective" in the May/June 2011 issue. Maybe it's just my Jesus Movement-Baptist beginnings, but I always get a lot more from hearing what Christ has done for me than about what I'm supposed to do for Him. Don't get me wrong, I believe in sanctification, but I'll never begin a sermon or talk (or magazine article) with the exhortation to be holy—that only comes after a lengthy exposition on His love for me in spite of my unholiness. To have it presented any other way has never helped me in my on-going 40 year faith journey. Keep up the good work.

—Phil Johnson, Exeter, New Hampshire

Letters Policy

New England Pastor welcomes and encourages your letters, with the reminder that the inclusion of a letter in this section does not mean that the opinions and ideas necessarily reflect the views of the editors. Letters will be edited for space and clarity. Send correspondence to New England Pastor, 67 Cottage St., Bangor, ME 04401 or newenglandpastor@gmail.com.

continued from page 3

sanctification; of becoming more like Jesus. But isn't the Christian journey from beginning to end received solely on the basis of faith? Are we not justified and sanctified as our hearts respond in faith—and thus, these so-called "disciplines" are done in response to receiving God's grace, not as a basis for it?

Unfortunately, I very rarely hear and read much about faith at all when it comes to the topic of "Spiritual Formation." There is little-to-no emphasis on the objective work of Christ on Calvary; of the fact that Christ forgives us of our sins and gives us a new heart when we respond to Him by faith;

of the fact that we have a seeking Savior who writes His law on our hearts and minds and finishes the work He began in us, thus making obedience a delight to us.

This, to me, is what is most troubling about "Spiritual Formation."

- 1 Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: the path to spiritual growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 7.
- 2 Rick Howard, in his book, *The Omega Rebellion* (Coldwater, Mich.: Remnant Publications, 2010), 25-30, does a good job of contrasting the faith-based experience of Martin Luther, which catapulted the

Reformation, and the works-based experience of his contemporary Ignatius of Loyola, who was the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and forefather of modern "Spiritual Formation."

Shawn Brace pastors the Bangor and Dexter churches in Maine. He and his wife, Camille, have a handsome son, Camden, and a beautiful daughter, Acadia. He is the author of two books, including the recently released *Pursued*, published by Pacific Press. When Shawn isn't busy pastoring, he loves spending time outdoors—especially photographing the beauty of New England.

Once More With Power

by Shawn Brace

Note: This article first appeared in the May 26, 2011 issue of the *Adventist Review*.

—Editors



The Advent movement was born among its granite hills and narrow valleys, but today the region holds the distinction of being one of the least religious areas of the United States. One hundred seventy years after the message of the second coming of Jesus swept through hundreds of town churches and urban sanctuaries, many of those congregations are small or dying.

Adventism itself has not been immune from the larger trend. The largest Seventh-day Adventist church in the region would be a mid-sized congregation almost anywhere else in the United States.

But the three states that comprise the church's Northern New England Conference (NNEC)—Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont—are experiencing a remarkable awakening in recent months. The NNEC prayer ministries, under the leadership of Kelly Veilleux, has launched a series of “Righteousness by Faith” rallies throughout the conference with the hopes of lifting up the message of “Christ our righteousness” and encouraging revival. Five months along, the response has been overwhelming.

Responding to a Need

Hundreds have attended and been blessed during the course of the two weekend rallies that have been held so far. Starting in Barre, Vermont, January 14 and 15; and Portland, Maine, April 8 and 9; the rallies will continue through 2011 in strategic locations throughout the conference, including Concord, New Hampshire, and Bangor, Maine. “There seems to be a real hunger for Jesus Christ among us,” says Rick Kuntz, who has served as conference evangelist for the past eight years and is one of the rally speakers. “It’s been exciting to see the response.”

One such excited responder was Joel Ongado Oyieke, who was one of the nearly

400 who attended the Portland rally while visiting from Kenya. “The presentations here today are something that I have never heard preached this way,” Oyieke offered. “I wish this could be done for our youth in Kenya,” he added, explaining that the youth in Kenya are becoming disgruntled” over presentations of Adventism consisting mostly of “what to do and what not to do.”

“I just couldn’t figure out how to be good,” said Smith, who grew up in an Adventist home but drifted away from the church for many years because she didn’t sense the gospel message present. “I’ve tried very, very hard to be good, and I just can’t seem to do it. I get really frustrated with myself,” she shared.

Concerns of a similar kind prompted Veilleux, who identifies herself as a fifth generation Seventh-day Adventist, to feel a burden to initiate these rallies. For many years, she says, knowing “how to act like an Adventist came easily,” but she came to realize she was only “playing church” and did not know Jesus as her Savior. Over the course of many years, as she began grasping the message of righteousness by faith, she felt an increasing desire to share it with others as a means of facilitating revival.

“As I have been studying this subject,” she explains, “God has given me a great passion to help others see the beauty of this message.”

With additional motivation provided by General Conference president Ted Wilson’s calls for revival and reformation, she approached the NNEC administrators and asked if she could pursue the planning of these rallies throughout the three states. When they eagerly gave their support, plans quickly took shape.

Veilleux soon recruited pastors who shared the same passion and were willing to team up with her. Thus far, six pastors—Brian Bilbrey, Shawn Brace, Greg Carter, Cliff Gleason, Rick Kuntz, and Arnet Mathers—have delivered messages over the two weekends. This collaboration, offers Kuntz, is one of the strengths of the rallies, saying that it is “exciting to see the message going through a team or body rather than being focused on an individual.”

Each weekend focuses on messages that strike a balance between the assurance of God’s love and forgiveness and the promise of victorious living. There is also extended time for prayer and, perhaps most heartwarming of all, a time of testimony at the end, often accompanied by many tears.

Changed Lives

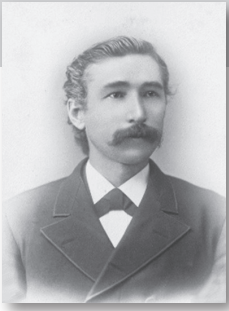
One individual who shed many tears while attending the Portland rally was Kimi Smith. “I just couldn’t figure out how to be good,” said Smith, who grew up in an Adventist home but drifted away from the church for many years because she didn’t sense the gospel message present. “I’ve tried very, very hard to be good, and I just can’t seem to do it. I get really frustrated with myself,” she shared. Now, however, in light of what she learned throughout the weekend, she says she is finally discovering both relief and joy.

Meanwhile, Herb Noyes, who also attended the Portland rally, couldn’t contain his excitement. “I’ve been waiting 50 years for this weekend!” he

continued on page 7

Studies in Galatians: The Two Covenants—Gal. 4:21-24

by A.T. Jones



Note: This article first appeared in the July 10, 1900 issue of the Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald.

—Editors

TELL me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants: the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.”

The covenant from Mount Sinai is the covenant that God made with the children of Israel when he took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt.

That covenant was faulty. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.” Heb. 8:7.

That covenant was faulty in the promises: for the second covenant is “a better covenant” than that, in that it “was established upon better promises.” Heb. 8:6.

The fault in that covenant was primarily, in the people. “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord when I will make a new covenant.” Heb. 8:8.

Therefore, since the fault of that covenant was in its promises, and the fault was primarily in the people themselves, it follows that the promises upon which that covenant was established were primarily the promises of the people.

What, then, were these promises?—They are in the covenant which was made with them when they came forth out of Egypt, and here is that covenant:—

“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a

peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” “And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” Ex. 19:4-6, 8.

In this agreement, all the people promised to obey the voice of the Lord. They had not yet heard what that voice would speak. But in the twentieth chapter, they heard that voice speaking the words of the ten commandments, to which, when the Lord had spoken, “he added no more.” And when they had heard this, they solemnly renewed their promise: “All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient.”

Therefore, since the fault of that covenant was in its promises, and the fault was primarily in the people themselves, it follows that the promises upon which that covenant was established were primarily the promises of the people.

That this is the covenant that the Lord made with them when he took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt, is made certain by the following words:—

“For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, AND I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” Jer. 7:22, 23.

And this certainly is confirmed in the following words: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you; so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God.” Jer. 11:3, 4.

Note carefully each of these three statements of the covenant, and see how the promises lie. The first one runs, on the part of the Lord: “IF ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, THEN. . . ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation,” etc. By this the Lord’s promises could not come in until they had fulfilled their promises; for the covenant begins with an “if.” “IF ye will” do so and so, “THEN” so and so.

This is the arrangement also in the second statement, “Obey my voice AND I will be your God, AND ye shall be my people.” According to this agreement, he was not to be their God, nor they his people, until they had done what they promised; until they had obeyed his voice, as they had promised.

The third statement stands the same: “Obey my voice and do them, according to all which I command you: SO shall ye be my people, and I will be your God.” This makes it perfectly plain, not only that none of the Lord’s part could come in until they had done what they had promised; but that the Lord’s part was to come in BY THE DOING of what they had promised. “Obey my voice,” “and do;” “SO [in this way, by this means] shall ye be my people, and I will be your God.”

Since, then, in this covenant the Lord’s part, what the Lord could do, the Lord’s promises, could come in only in the secondary way as a consequence of the people’s doing what they had promised,

it is perfectly plain that that covenant rested, was established, only upon the promises of the people.

What, then, were these promises of the people worth? What had they promised? They had promised to obey the voice of the Lord indeed. They had promised to obey his law,—to keep the ten commandments, indeed.

But what was their condition when they made these promises?—It corresponded to the condition of Ishmael in the family of Abraham. They corresponded to Ishmael: they had been born only of the flesh, and knew only the birth of the flesh, and so had only the mind of the flesh. But “the minding of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither in-deed can be.” “They that are in the flesh can not please God.”

This being their condition, what could be the worth of any promises that they might make to keep the ten commandments indeed?—Any or all such promises could be worth simply nothing at all.

Accordingly, in that covenant, the people promised to do something that it was simply impossible for them to do. And since the Lord, with his promises, could not, in that covenant, come in until they had fulfilled their promises; until they had done what they agreed, it is certain that, for any

practical purpose which the people discerned, or designed, that covenant was worth nothing at all, because the promises upon which it rested were worth nothing at all.

In the nature of things that covenant could only gender to bondage; because the people upon whose promises it rested were themselves already subject to the bondage of the flesh, the bondage of sin; and instead of keeping the commandments of God indeed, they would break them. And not only would they break the commandments, which they had promised not to break, but they would inevitably break the promises that they had made not to break the commandments. This simply because they were in a condition in which they were not subject to the law of God and could not be.

And this was demonstrated immediately. For, when Moses had gone up into the mount, to receive a copy of the law, which they had promised to “obey indeed,” he had been gone but forty days when they exclaimed: “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex. 32:1. And they made themselves a golden calf—the god of Egypt—and worshiped it, after the manner of Egypt; which shows that, in heart, they were still in Egyptian bondage, and were indeed as

Ishmael, the son of Hagar the Egyptian, “born after the flesh.”

And though all this is written for the understanding of all people who should come afterward, and for our admonition “upon whom the ends of the world are come,” it is a singular fact that even to-day there are persons who, knowing only the birth of the flesh, not having been born again, not knowing the birth of the Spirit, yet will enter into exactly such a covenant; and will sign to it, to keep all the commandments of God indeed. But the trouble with these is just the trouble that was with the people at Sinai, as it is always the trouble with people at Sinai: “They had no true conception of the holiness of God; of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts. . . Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, THEY DECLARED: ‘All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient.’ ”¹

1 Quoted in Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1890), 371.

A.T. Jones, (1850-1923) was a Seventh-day Adventist theologian and editor, serving as editor of *Signs of the Times*, the *American Sentinel*, and the *Review and Herald*. He was known mostly for his writing and preaching on religious liberty and righteousness by faith.

continued from page 5

joyfully exclaimed.

Mike Ortel, president of the conference, also attended the rally and shared Noyes’s enthusiasm. “I sensed a bonding, a unity, and a mini revival throughout the congregation,” Ortel said. “God’s love was experienced and shared. Many heavy spiritual burdens and guilt were left at the Savior’s feet.”

Such testimonies have been continuously echoed as attendees have come to sense the depths of God’s love and the power of His grace. In an attempt to keep the revival fires burning brightly, these testimonies have been repeated on the weekly Thursday evening prayer line. “One woman said that when she finally

understood righteousness by faith,” says Veilleux, “her depression was gone.

Another woman said that she can now see the bigger picture of God’s amazing grace and His power to overcome sin.”

Testimonies like these motivate Veilleux and the rally presenters to press forward. They are already making plans to continue into 2012, perhaps adding other pastors and lay members in order to cover more territory. “We are on the borders of Canaan once again; let’s not turn back this time!” Veilleux says.

“I hope this will swell into a loud cry,” adds Kuntz, “and that Jesus will be seen in all His loveliness—not just in our words, but that Jesus can be abiding in us constantly, so that He can be lifted up

in reality before the people.”

—for more information, or to listen to audio from the rallies, visit www.nnecprayerministries.com. To join the Thursday evening righteousness by faith prayer line that convenes at 7:00 p.m. (Eastern), call 712-451-6100 and enter pin 3687072.

Shawn Brace pastors the Bangor and Dexter churches in Maine. He and his wife, Camille, have a handsome son, Camden, and a beautiful daughter, Acadia. He is the author of two books, including the recently released *Pursued*, published by Pacific Press. When Shawn isn’t busy pastoring, he loves spending time outdoors—especially photographing the beauty of New England.

Is Justification Legal?

by Jerry Finneman



There is one justification, but two phases. The first is forensic, or

legal, and was given to mankind by way of the cross. Legal justification by way of the cross focuses on the acquitted penalty brought about by Christ's death. It emphasizes Christ's full payment of the debt for sin and consequently liberated mankind from condemnation and thus released us from our deserved punishment. This phase of justification is the result of the successful achievement Christ accomplished in His death (Rom 4:25; 5:9, 18).

The second phase is the experiential aspect of justification and occurs when one believes in Christ with heartfelt appreciation (Rom 10:10; 5:1). This second aspect is the intended effect of the legal phase. It is the transformation of heart and mind within the believer, and thus is a justification by faith. There is need for understanding the distinction between the cause of justification and its condition. The legal phase is the cause. Our exercise of faith is the condition for receiving the legal phase.

This article will discuss the first phase of justification—the legal or forensic aspect. Because of space constraints, the experiential, or faith phase, of justification will follow later in another article.

Justification has to do with the legal side of salvation. It's a judicial term, a word of the law courts. It lies at the heart of the gospel concerning Jesus. The term "legal justification" is used to give a practical demonstration of what Christ did on Calvary in behalf of all men in lifting the sentence of condemnation that legally belongs to us because of transgressions of God's holy

law (Rom 5:6-9; John 3:14-17).

Some people get nervous and will not use the term "legal justification" because it is not found in Scripture.

However, as a rule and for the most part, the Bible is not verbally inspired. A few exceptions are: 1) the giving of the Ten Commandments by God; 2) most time prophecies; and 3) angels with messages directly from God. Thought inspiration is the rule.

Along with the term "legal justification," there are no words in Scripture for the following: substitution, vicarious, representative, objective, subjective, prevenient grace, common grace, investigative judgment, presumption of innocence. These are concepts. So, the question to be asked is: "Are not these concepts biblically true?"

There was a time when justification generally was understood to be a legal concept. Forensic justification should not be strange doctrine to Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventists with our strong insistence on the validity of the law of God and the pre-advent investigative judgment. These are recognized as 1) a legal requirement (law) and 2) a legal procedure (investigation) according to judicial procedural rules.

The Bible abounds with the concept of legal justification. This, then, is not the time to abandon ship over its forensic nature. The question that should be addressed is: When did the word "justification" cease to be a legal term?

Justification is the sentence of a judge. In redemption, it is the gracious act of God, as Judge, who pronounced a decree of acquittal and then restored the fallen race to Divine favor when Christ died (Eph 1:3-6). Jesus, the Representative of humanity,

in His death, exhausted the penalty of the law that came because of man's transgressions (Gal 3:10-13).

In our age, the doctrine of justification has faded into the background, while the more experiential teachings of regeneration and sanctification are made more prominent and above justification with some Christians maintaining that sanctification precedes justification (as in the Council of Trent). Not only does that tradition put the biblical teaching of justification down, but Francis Pieper's observation is incredibly applicable to current situations within Protestantism: "[I]t is a fact that modern Protestant theology, which by the denial of Inspiration has surrendered the Scripture principle and develops doctrine from 'experience' and other subjective sources, has discarded the Christian doctrine of justification."¹ Justification is not just a nice doctrine; it is the key to our restoration to favor with God.

To repeat, "justification" is a legal term and, truthfully, cannot be denied. It comes out of the legal genre characterized by the subject matter of court language dealing especially with condemnation set over against its opposite verdict of acquittal. There has to be a sufficient legal reason for justification as well as for condemnation.

In its first uses in Scripture, the Hebrew verb "to justify" (sdq) is directly connected to judicial proceedings with the accompanying legal/forensic meaning. Consider the very first use of the verb in Scripture. The word refers to a judicial clearing of persons charged with theft: "Then Judah said, 'What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear (sdq) ourselves?' (Gen.

44:16). The NASB: 1995 Update, puts it this way: “[H]ow can we justify ourselves?”¹ Clearly, *sdq* here means “to prove ourselves just, to declare ourselves righteous, to prove our innocence.”²

Not only are the first uses of *sdq* given in legal settings and forensic transactions. The same meaning is used predominantly throughout the Old Testament. A sampling follows.

In Exodus, chapters 21-23, God detailed His ten moral commandments and also instructed His people in civil laws of justice. He gave explicit instructions regarding lying and murdering: “Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify (*sdq*) the wicked” (Ex 23:7). In Israel’s wilderness wanderings, God established the legal system. He gave explicit instructions for carrying out legal proceedings, by judges, for either justification of the innocent or condemnation and judicial punishment for those guilty of criminal activity: “If there be a dispute between men, and they go to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify (*sdq*) the righteous, and condemn the wicked . . .” (Deut 25:1). Here again, the terms justify and condemn are set down as opposites in a judicial procedure.

Later, Solomon in his dedication prayer for the temple joined the legal language of judgment concerning justification and condemnation with oath taking (See 1 Kings 8:31, 32). And before this, David used the word in its legal sense (Ps. 51:4). He refers to the judicial clearing of God when He is judged. David confessed his sin against God and His confession “justified” God. Paul cites this verse in Rom 3:4, and, likewise, places it in a legal setting.

Isaiah wrote about acquittal, which is a formal legal declaration of “not guilty”: “Put me in remembrance; let us contend (judicial language) together; state your case that you may be acquitted (*sdq*)” (margin: “justified”) (Isa 43:26).

The New Testament teaches this legal phase of justification as well

as the Old. This is especially so in passages where justification is in close legal association, but in contrast, with condemnation: “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge [judicial language] against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom 8:31-34; see also 5:16, 18).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul again wrote of the forensic aspect of justification: “For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not justified by this: but he who judges me is the Lord” (1Cor 4:4). The NET puts it this way: “I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.”

The final use of the forensic aspect of justification as used in Scripture is found in Rev 22:11. Here we observe justification’s legal connection at the close of the pre-Advent judgment. The verse reveals legal declarations based on the final judicial investigative procedure:

“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous (**δικαιος**; “A righteous person is one justified by faith”³), let him be righteous (**δικαιοσύνη**; “quality or state of juridical correctness with focus on redemptive action, righteousness”⁴) still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev 22:11).

This declaration is the judicial pronouncement of the Judge of the universe at the end of the Investigative Judgment. The heavenly court closes with this pronouncement of the last decision. With no cases any longer under discussion nor further investigation, the

judicial sentence in heaven’s court is pronounced in both the legal justification and the by-faith experience of believers, along with the legal sentence of condemnation against unbelievers.

In summary, the answer to the question in the title of this article: “Is Justification Legal?” is an unequivocal “Yes!” This has been demonstrated in its legal connection, its Scriptural use, and as used in the final sentence of the acquittal of believers at the end of the pre-Advent judgment.

- 1 Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 555.
- 2 The NET Bible, 1st ed. (Spokane, Wash.: Biblical Studies Press, 2006), notes on Gen 44:16.
- 3 Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 2000).
- 4 W. Arndt, F.W. Danker, and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 247.

Jerry Finneman serves as a chaplain for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He lives in Marshall, Michigan.

A Call to Repentance

by Ellen G. White



Note: This article first appeared with the same title in the December 15, 1904 issue of the Review and Herald.

—Editors

We are living in the time of the end.

Thrones and churches have united to oppose God's purposes. The association of man with man, which God designed should be a means of strengthening goodness and happiness, is used as a means of strengthening evil and of developing tendencies to rebellion. Men have assumed despotic power, and human laws have been put in the place of the law of God.

It is the reign of Antichrist. God's law is set aside. The Scriptures are exchanged for the traditions of men. Satan has become the ruler of the world; and in his hands temptation has become a science. He rules over a vast, well-organized empire. Sin has stimulated his followers into fearful activity. Men have combined to perpetuate evil. The sale of intoxicating liquor, destructive alike to soul and body, is legalized by Christian governments.

Influences are to be set in motion that will proclaim to the world the first, second, and third angels' messages. The world is to be warned, and I beseech those who know the truth to do all in their power to sound the message, "Prepare to meet thy God."

"It is time for thee, Lord, to work," David said; "for they have made void thy law." David lived many hundreds of years ago, and he thought then that the time had come for God to interfere to vindicate his honor and repress the swelling unrighteousness. Today men have almost filled the cup of their iniquity. But the Lord does not execute the death penalty on the transgressors of his law until they have heard the warning, and have been given

an opportunity to see the result of rebellion against him. How wonderful is his forbearance and patience! He is putting a constraint on his own attributes. Omnipotence is exerted over Omnipotence.

"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power," "plenteous in mercy" and forgiveness; but he "will not at all acquit the wicked." Soon there is to be an awakening of his displeasure, and who then can stay his wrath?

In every church in our land, there is needed confession, repentance, and reconversion. The disappointment of Christ is beyond description.

There is a work to be done in our cities,—work to be done in every place. God will take men from the plow, from the sheepfold, from the vineyard, and will put them in the place of those who think that they must have the highest wages. Those who grasp for high wages will find in the money they get all the reward they will ever receive. Such ones cannot be expected to feel a burden for the salvation of perishing souls. The Lord cannot use such ones in his work. Until they banish selfishness from their hearts, their efforts are worthless.

God says to his people today, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or

else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Will they heed the reproof? Will they dare to trifle with so direct and decided a statement, and keep their commended excellencies blasted as with a mildew because they allow Satan to steal in among them. "Thou hast left thy first love," and therefore there is no steadfastness of purpose. Without this love, all knowledge, all capabilities, all outward zeal and service, are worthless. You do not receive from Christ grace to impart to others. And while you do not reveal the love that Christ has commanded you to reveal, your light is not shining forth to the world.

Leaving the first love is represented as a spiritual fall. Many have fallen thus. In every church in our land, there is needed confession, repentance, and reconversion. The disappointment of Christ is beyond description. Unless those who have sinned speedily repent, the deceptions of the last days will overtake them. Some, though they do not realize it, are preparing to be overtaken. God calls for repentance without delay. So long have many trifled with salvation that their spiritual eyesight is dimmed, and they cannot discern between light and darkness. Christ is humiliated in his people. The first love is gone, the faith is weak, there is need of a thorough transformation.

My brethren and sisters, humble your hearts before the Lord. Seek him earnestly. I have an intense desire to see you walking in the light as Christ is in the light. I pray most earnestly for you. But I cannot fail to see that the light which God has given me is

continued on page 12

Resurrecting the Gospel of Christ and His Righteousness

by Edmond Labbe

What an eventful weekend I experienced as I attended the Righteousness by Faith rally held in Portland, Maine, the week of April 8-9, 2011. The discourses given by my ministering brethren I know were a blessing to many, if not most. I can say this as factual, for as I was leaving for home, a church member addressed me saying, “Ed, I finally see it. I believe it. I accept it. For years, as I attended church and listened to you and others teach about the gospel of righteousness by faith, I thought you were crazy. At times, I would wonder and struggle to see the benefits one receives through righteousness by faith in Christ that justifies or makes a believer in Christ right before our heavenly Father.”

As I listened to her testimony, I was overwhelmed with thanksgiving for what this precious message does to a believer who, from the heart, sees and accepts Christ’s precious gift of life-giving righteousness. There is no greater experience in the life of a gospel minister than to hear and see the living testimony of one who has heartily experienced this most precious, glorious message that at times seems so difficult to present. To you, my ministering brethren, this can no longer be a weekend rally but a daily rally to reach those who, Jesus said, would in our day, “hunger and thirst after [life-giving] righteousness” (Matthew 5:6).¹ Please, brethren, let’s fulfill our gospel commission. This is our day, our time. May we not, as so many generations in the past, for one reason or another, let it pass by.

Of the many discourses and scriptures presented at the rally, the one presented on the “New Covenant” by Pastor Shawn Brace stood out in my mind as the most timely and

critically important subject in light of righteousness by faith. For years, from the time I first opened my Bible in the late seventies to almost the middle of the last decade, I had doubts as to the true meaning and application of Hebrews 8:10. As Shawn was giving his discourse, my mind began to race with scriptures I had studied in relation to the covenants—the covenant Jesus had made with Adam after the fall, Abraham after the great flood, the New Testament Church, and, finally, the remnant Seventh-day Adventist Church after the great Advent movement.

There is no greater experience in the life of a gospel minister than to hear and see the living testimony of one who has heartily experienced this most precious, glorious message that at times seems so difficult to present.

Although Hebrews 8:10 can be a confusing and difficult text, with prayer and applying the Bible principle of “precept upon precept,” “line upon line,” “here a little and there a little,” the understanding of its critical application is revealed. Central in His covenant statement, Paul quotes God as saying, “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.” In regards to, “I will put my laws into their mind” the word “laws” in this context must apply to covenant principles or laws the apostle Paul

defines in his gospel message to the Romans. How critical to understand that the word “law” or “laws” must be understood in its application of the subject being studied!

As with every generation of believers from the time of Adam’s fall, specific truths were given pertaining to laws or principles that reveal the Divine character, will, and government of God. As we study Old Testament Scripture, we find especially in the days of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, four critical codes of conduct or laws defined as principles of right doing—laws that are defined in four categories: 1) The moral code or the Ten Commandments. 2) The Ceremonial code pertaining to sacrifices and feasts. 3) The civil code or principles that govern our social community. 4) The health code or the principles that govern the longevity and health of man’s being.

These four codes of conduct, as important as they are in reality, cannot and do not justify anyone with the right to eternal life. These codes, as Scripture reveals, are action laws which, when obeyed, afford peace and harmony throughout life among believers and must be understood in their context. It’s the laws pertaining to God’s covenants that are not easily seen and understood in the Old Testament that Paul makes exceptionally clear in the Book of Romans. These Covenant laws, rightly understood by the remnant people of God, would today cement a much healthier and deeper gospel meaning of Christ and His life-giving righteousness.

As we have found, there are four codes Scripture uses to instruct man in his probationary lifetime. The most important, the most *critical of all codes* necessary in presenting the gospel

continued on page 12

continued from page 10

covenant of life-giving righteousness seems to have been buried beneath loads of doctrine. This code—or shall we say *covenant code*—is found in Paul’s epistle to the Romans and is revealed in the four gospels of Christ from the beginning of His ministry to His final commission to His disciples.

The first and foremost covenant principle Jesus spoke of when he returned from his wilderness experience was “Repent ye, and *believe* the gospel” (Mark 1:15, KJV). The word “believe” is coupled with the word faith in Scripture. Jesus said, “He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth not* the Son shall not see life” (John 3:36). Those who believe on or in the Son of God must reflect the definition of faith Paul categorizes in Hebrews 11 and properly concludes in Romans 3 as

“the law of faith” (Romans 3:27). Yes, faith is called a law in Scripture—a law, a principle, a rule, a regulation that initiates a Covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not just a passive faith but a faith based on “Thus saith the Lord.” As one believes in the “gospel of Christ,” the “law of faith” is accredited to the believer, producing and imputing what the apostle Paul calls the “law of righteousness” (Romans 9:31), which produces and accredits the “law of justification by faith,” (my term), thereby sealing in the heart of the believer “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2).

These four covenant laws—rightly understood as gospel principles, as described earlier—cement a much healthier and deeper scriptural meaning of Christ and His life-giving righteousness.

Brethren, I believe there are mountains of scriptural light that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” is willing to reveal.²

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are taken from the King James Version and the italics are supplied.

2 Because of space limitation, I cannot develop it fully, but I would like to reveal to you one of the most difficult texts that has ever perplexed my mind. The text is Romans 3:21—which has, in light of a more systematic understanding of God’s covenant principles, dispelled much of my perplexity.

continued from page 10

not favorable to our ministers or our churches. You have left your first love. Self-righteousness is not the wedding-garment. A failure to follow the clear light of truth is our fearful danger. The message to the Laodicean church reveals our condition as a people.

Satan is seeking with all his subtlety to corrupt mind and heart. And O how successful he is in leading men and women to depart from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ! Under his influence hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are roused into activity. Ministers and church-members are in danger of allowing self to take the throne.

Human wisdom, human ability, is nothingness in God’s sight. He who supposes that he is superior to his fellow men in wisdom will sooner or later reveal traits of character that are a dishonor to God. In the church today there are many of this stamp,—men and women in whom the loveliness

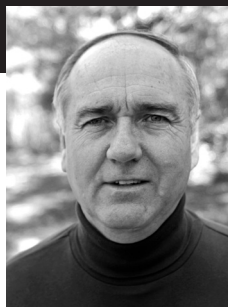
of Christ is hidden by traits of character that unfit the possessor for membership in the Lord’s family in the heavenly courts.

There are many who are not Bible Christians. They follow a standard of their own devising. If they would see their defective, distorted characters as they are accurately reflected in the mirror of God’s Word, they would be so alarmed that they would fall upon their faces before God in contrition of soul, and tear away the rags of their self-righteousness.

My brethren in the ministry, you ought to be reaching higher and still higher in Christian experience,—higher, not by self-assertion, self-assumption, and self-confidence, but by growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Press forward toward the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ. How much we need to be faithful watchmen over self, to

make sure that we have not the spirit that leads us to hurt and destroy in the place of using our God-given talents to awaken the inhabitants of our world to a realization of their lost and undone condition. Let us not be content to be as those who have left their first love.

Ellen G. White was a prophet in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her ministry spanned over 70 years in the 19th and early 20th centuries. She is the most widely translated female author in the history of literature.



Lessons from Today

by Bill Brace

Harold Camping is

my brother . . . and,

for that matter, so was Osama bin Laden.

Well, now that I've got your attention, let me explain from a biblical perspective what I mean. But before doing so, let me review the domination these two individuals had in our news and minds just a few months ago.

First, as we all well remember, Osama bin Laden was finally exterminated by US forces on May 2 of this year. After a decade of his very successful subterfuge, American forces found him in Pakistan, hidden in the most unlikely of places—within the shadows of Pakistani's governmental regime. Quickly after the news of bin Laden's death was announced by President Obama, celebrations erupted in the late night and early morning hours all across the United States. Cheering and euphoric crowds made it plain how they felt about the demise of the most hated man in America's conscience.

Harold Camping also met recently with notoriety, not just here in the United States but also, to a lesser degree, throughout the world. His prediction that the rapture would occur on May 21 of this year met with a great deal of skepticism by many Bible students and scholars. However, there were millions who were not sure he was wrong and who became somewhat frightened as the deadline for the supposed rapture of the church, 2% or so of the world's population, drew near. Teenagers, comfortable middle America, and the easily persuaded all released a sigh of relief when the day, May 21, ended and life went on.

Prior to and in the immediate aftermath of Camping's rapture date,

a goodly number of individuals, citing the unmistakable counsel of Jesus in Matthew 24:36, took this sincere Christian man to the woodshed. Even some within our own denominational ranks were quick to cast aspersions and belittle him.

But should we have done so? Especially in light of our own history? If ever a person should have felt sympathy with Harold Camping, wouldn't it have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Our very roots come from a similar disappointment which occurred in 19th century America, an occasion that served as an incubator for the great Advent movement we now are blessed by and called to participate in.

And what of Osama bin Laden? Well, is there ever a time to celebrate the death of a person whom Jesus died for and engraved upon the palms of His hands two millennia ago? Yes, he may have been, in the minds of some, evil incarnate, but he was still a child of God. Did not Jesus die for the whole world, including this man who became, in one sense, evil personified?

Such thoughts bring me back to my original premise: Both these men, based upon biblical and divine principles, have been part of this great web of humanity, and, thus, should be considered part of God's world family.

One thing that I have learned in recent years, and something that has brought greater clarity, deeper understanding, and encouragement to my view of God and the gospel, is the corporate concept that is a major motif of Scripture. It lies there—from the revealing of the Godhead to the example given in the Edenic marriage to the last pages of Revelation. It is a well-known fact: The Hebrew mind thought first in a corporate sense and only secondarily

in an individual sense. I have a friend, Steven, Jewish by birth, Seventh-day Adventist Christian by choice, who told me that when he was growing up, he was taught, "You were there at the Red Sea. You were there at Mt. Sinai." (How I chuckle at sports fans, who replicate this thinking after their team does well, with their exclamation: "We won!" as if they had actually played for the particular favorite team of theirs!)

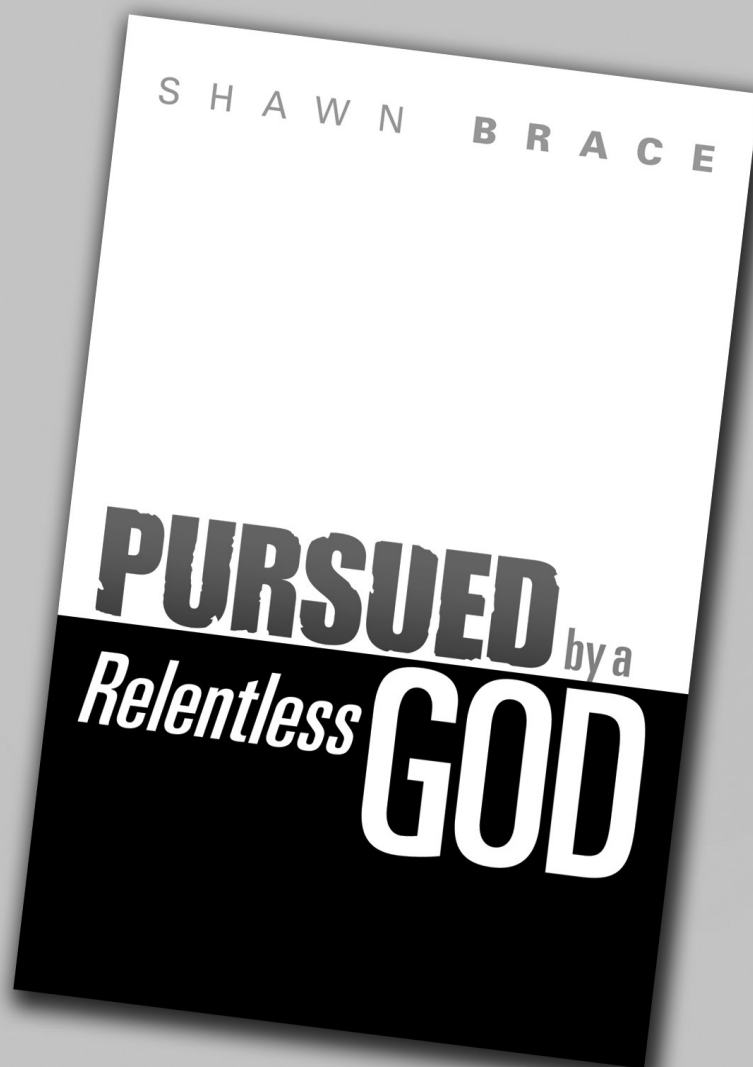
So what does the above pervasive biblical truth mean for us today? Well, first, it is the basis for John Donne's adage, "No man is an island, entire of itself," and for the awareness that we are all, in a profound sort of way, brothers and sisters—members of the body called humanity. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it opens up the door and our eyes for a much greater understanding of the gospel's accomplishments, and the issuance of a call, therapeutic in nature, to God's remnant church in these closing hours of earth's history.

Yes, I am hopeful we may soon see fulfilled the promise of God, "[I] will do better unto you than at your beginnings" (Ezekiel 36:11).

To be continued . . .

Bill Brace has been involved in urban ministry for over twenty-five years. He pastors Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Braintree and Norwood, Massachusetts. In addition, he maintains an active radio ministry. His program "Portraits of God" is currently heard on several stations around the United States. He and his wife, Melanie, live in Norfolk, Massachusetts, and they have three grown children, one son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, and four beautiful grandchildren.

NEW RELEASE!



We hide. God seeks. Eternity awaits.

Available at your local Adventist Book Center,
adventistbookcenter.com, amazon.com, or by calling
1-800-765-6955

Righteousness
By
Faith
RAILY
Northern New England
Conference Presents . . .

“...our churches are dying for the want of teaching
on the subject of righteousness by faith in Christ.”

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made
heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:7

COMING IN 2011 - TO A LOCATION NEAR YOU

September	23-24	Concord SDA Church
October	13-16	Camp Lawroweld
December	2-3	Bangor SDA Church

Presenters: Rick Kuntz, Arnet Mathers, Shawn Brace,
Cliff Gleason, Brain Bilbrey, Bill Brace
Sponsored by: NNEC Prayer Ministries

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

67 Cottage St.
Bangor, ME 04401

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit No. 61
Montpelier, VT

